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# Reagan, Congress: Neither happy about compromises

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Since President Reagan was elected, no foreign policy has caused such deep divisions between Congress and the administration as U.S. involvement in the Nicaraguan civil war.

What began as covert operations, secretly financed by the CIA, has turned into a long-running congressional debate filled with compromises that have pleased neither side.

Secretary of State George Shultz says Congress must choose between "the good guys and the bad guys" in Nicaragua.

But critics say Reagan's policy hasn't worked. "The Sandinistas are more repressive, the war is continuing, the peace process hasn't moved anywhere," said Rep. Lee Hamilton, D-Ind., chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. "What have we gotten?"

The issue has a tangled history. In his first year in office, Reagan ordered the CIA to use its contingency fund to organize rebels to oppose the Sandinistas.

By 1983, when Congress first approved "covert" aid, the CIA was giving the rebels \$40 million a year in supplies.

But a key turning point came in 1984 after the CIA's attempt to mine harbors

## Congress' role

Nicaragua is an issue that won't go away for Congress:

**1982:** Congress passes a one-year ban on aid to any group "for the purpose" of overthrowing the Nicaragua government.

**1983:** Congress approves \$24 million in aid to the rebels.

**1984:** Congress suspends all aid to the rebels.

**1984:** Congress approves \$27 million in non-military aid.

**1984:** Reagan asks for \$100 million in military aid and other supplies.

House vote: March 18.

in Nicaragua was revealed. Congress suspended military and other aid until 1985.

In April, the House initially rejected Reagan's request for renewed aid — but a few days later Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega angered many in Congress by visiting Moscow. Within months, the House switched positions.

Congress approved \$27 million in non-military aid, but rejected Reagan's request that the CIA or the Defense Department administer the aid.